



MARCH 2013
Volume XLVIII
Number 07

the curlew

Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Birds along the Lower Rio Grande Valley *Larry Umthun Photography*

Membership Meeting
March 26, 2013
7:00 p.m.
Kennewick First Lutheran
Church, corner of Yelm and
Highway 395

The March meeting of LCBAS will feature our own Larry Umthun. Larry's program will be "Birds along the Lower Rio Grande Valley". Larry and his wife Lisa Hill recently returned from a six day trip to Texas where they met with Bill and Nancy LaFramboise. Traveling between McAllen and the Gulf Coast, they saw nearly 160 species, many of which you will see in the presentation.

Larry Umthun began taking pictures of birds in 2005. His pictures have been published twice in the Eastern Washington Vacation and Travel

Planner and Birds & Blooms magazine. You can also see Larry's pictures along the Sacagawea Heritage Trail.

The meeting begins at 7:00 p.m but the presentation usually begins about 7:45 p.m. after a brief bird ID segment and refreshments.

Anyone wishing to contribute cookies or even healthy snacks will be welcomed!
For more information go to lcbas.org.



Special Interest Articles:

- AUDUBON CONVENTION REGISTRATION
- Volunteer at a grouse lek!
- Coal and You
- Barn Owl Boot Camp
- Don't Forget Sandhill Crane Festival!

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Bateman Island Bird Walk *with Lisa Hill*

March 2, 2013

Spring migration has not yet begun and the birding on Bateman Island was a little slow on March 2. A small group of birders came up with 50 species, which is on the low side for a Bateman list. The

waters around the island were mostly empty, although small patches of mud attracted a GREATER YELLOWLEGS and a GLAUCOUS GULL.

Birds that over-winter

here in small numbers were still around. Three PACIFIC WRENS, two FOX SPARROWS and at least one GOLDEN-CROWNED SPARROW turned up along the main trail away from the causeway. One of the Pacific Wrens got our

Bateman Island Walk *Continued*

*"Greater Yellowlegs"
Photo courtesy Jane Abel*

attention with its lovely, gurgling song. We found a CLARK'S GREBE, a species that can usually be found in winter on the Yakima delta. Let's hope for more birds in April!

The next Bateman Island bird walk is **Saturday, April 6** at 8:00am. We meet in the parking lot of Wye Park near the island

**Barn Owl
Boot Camp****Saturday****April 20, 2013****12 - 2 pm****Richland Community Center****Howard Amon Park****Fun for the Whole Family!****"Adopt" an Owl!****Live Birds of Prey!****Refreshments!****And More!****President's message** *with Robin Priddy*

Thanks to Ed Rykiel, Lisa Hill, Nancy LaFramboise we now have new annotated bird lists, and bird check lists printed. These are also available on our website. Also thanks to Ed and Lisa, we almost have a lovely new poster for the Badger Kiosk! It should be printed in a month or two and will feature local wildlife and information, along with some of our own talented photographers.

Debbie Berkowitz and Ed Rykiel have been doing a great job keeping us apprised of many local conservation issues. These concern the Richland Shoreline Management Plan, work with the Trust for Public Land, the Duportail Bridge and some potential plant salvaging at Claybell Park. Look elsewhere in this issue or watch for alerts to attend meetings and participate in the public process available to us.

Cherie Beaudrand and Junior Audubon completed the Great Backyard Bird Count - and this month

they'll be making bird nests with the help of Barb Clarke, Kathy Criddle and Marilyn Hayes.

Several of our own members will be leading tours at the Sandhill Crane Festival April 5 - 7. Among them are James Cleaver, Kathy Criddle, Kevin Black and Heidi Newsome. It's good to have our own local expertise featured in this regional event. We'll have a table with information at the festival, too.

Greg Greger was awarded a lifetime achievement award at the McNary Winter Birds event. He founded the Friends of McNary group in 1955 and has been active in that group, and in Audubon since. Please remember his birthday celebration on March 30th at the Kiwanis Building (6007 Columbia Park Trail) in Columbia Park from 2 to 4 pm.

As always, thank you for the privilege of serving as President.

**The 16 th Annual
Othello Sandhill
Crane Festival!**

Where: Columbia National Wildlife Refuge and greater Othello area

When: April 5, 6 and 7, 2013

Experience the beauty and wonder of wildlife, highlighted by the return of Sandhill cranes to the Channeled Scablands. This three-day community event features a variety of activities from tours and lectures on the area's natural and cultural heritage to an art contest and children's activities. An admission fee is charged. For more information look online:

www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org

Volunteer at a Grouse Lek

There's nothing like a Columbian sharp-tailed grouse (*Tympanuchus phasianellus columbianus*) display to usher in a Northwest birdwatcher spring! Spokane Audubon Society, in partnership with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the Spokane Office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), is seeking volunteers to experience this pleasure.

Volunteers will assist with data collection on the status of sharp-tailed grouse and greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) for the Lincoln County Prairie Grouse Recovery Project centered on WDFW's Swanson Lake Wildlife Area and BLM lands in the Lake Creek drainage 10 miles south of Creston. Using WDFW protocols, data collection activities will include lek monitoring, tracking newly released radio-marked birds, and assistance with translocation. Training will be provided by project staff and volunteers.

Lek monitoring and translocation will occur during March through May 2013. Volunteers will register and track hours with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. Mileage reimbursement and per diem will be provided through an ALEA grant managed by the Spokane Audubon Society.

The Lincoln County Prairie Grouse Recovery Project, overseen by the WDFW, is considered essential to the survival of sharp-tailed and sage-grouse in Washington. Both species are state listed and the sage-grouse is a federal candidate for listing. Habitat degradation and fragmentation are the main contributors to the dramatic population declines of the past several decades. Recent recovery efforts, including the Lincoln County Prairie Grouse Recovery Project, show evidence of stabilizing the state's population of both species.

For seven years, the WDFW has captured sharp-tailed grouse in Idaho and trans-located them to the Recovery Area to bolster a greatly diminished residual native population and improve genetic diversity. Greater sage-grouse were extirpated from this historic range by the end of the 1980s. The WDFW has trans-located sage-grouse from Oregon for the past five years to re-establish a population in the area. The wildlife recovery efforts have been accompanied by the acquisition of public lands by the WDFW and the BLM and public and private habitat restoration work.

Trans-located birds are radio collared and tracked to determine home range and reproductive activity and success. Annual lek monitoring provides the state's census data for both species. These data and other research have yielded valuable information to support habitat restoration decisions. Volunteer assistance with data collection is an important contribution to the recovery efforts.

Volunteers may participate in one or more counts that include an afternoon training and count grouse at leks the following morning. Scheduled counts TBA March-May. Bring binoculars and wear warm clothes. For more information about volunteer opportunities or to register for training, contact Kim Thorburn, Spokane Audubon Society, at kthorburn@msn.com.



LOWER COLUMBIA BASIN AUDUBON SEEKS SPANISH SPEAKING VOLUNTEER

The Chapter has decided to attempt to mimic a program that is conducted by North Central Washington Audubon in Wenatchee called "Team Naturaleza" ¡Salga A La Naturaleza! The idea is to connect to a larger local audience by engaging with our Hispanic community. We would like Bilingual volunteers to accompany our bird walks or nature walks to interpret the local area natural history, flora and fauna. The goal is to expose the Latino community to opportunities to experience the natural world in our local area and to engage attendees in discussions of conservation issues. The idea is to pair a bilingual volunteer with local field trip leaders and to have trips and walks be co-led so that all can enjoy the event and so that a language barrier is not an issue. If you are interested or know someone who might be interested please contact Heidi Newsome at Heidi_Newsome@yahoo.com.

Conservation Issues

Curlew readers, meet King Coal *by Madeleine Brown*

Coal, the fossil fuel that powered the Industrial Revolution, is still burned in 21st century power plants and in some new ones cropping up in our energy-thirsty world. But King coal is dirty, and burning it harms us several ways:

- It puts carbon into the air and contributes significantly to climate change.
- It puts other toxic chemicals in the air, such as mercury and lead and arsenic, which poison our rivers and streams and the living things that use them.
- Coal dust is directly associated with increases in respiratory illnesses.
- Mining coal, through strip mining in the Powder River Basin in the West, or mountaintop removal in Appalachia, destroys local environments.

(Here is a link to an article in Audubon Magazine – Kicking the Coal Habit:

<http://www.audubonmagazine.org/articles/climate/kicking-coal-habit>)

Our region is threatened by the proposed transport of coal from the Powder River Basin in Montana and Wyoming to ports on the Pacific coast for export to Asia. Coal trains more than a mile-long may clog Washington's already stressed rail and river traffic systems. Powder River coal is friable and moist, which can lead to spontaneous combustion. The routes for coal trains brings these uncovered coal loads through our towns from Spokane through Kennewick, Finley, Pasco, and then along the Gorge. The coal would be barged from a proposed terminal in Boardman, or all the way down the Gorge to either Longview (another proposed export terminal) or up the I-5 corridor to Bellingham (the largest proposed export terminal).



Tri-Cities

Coal's mining, transport, and ultimate burning run completely counter to Audubon's mission to conserve and restore ecosystems. Coal harms the environment where it's mined, where it travels, and where it's stored. And when it burns it pollutes the air and warms the planet.

What can you do?

- Since 2% of electricity in the Tri-Cities comes from coal, you might try cutting your electrical consumption by 2%.

- You can become better informed by visiting www.sightline.org, a northwest sustainability think tank that does credible research on coal--and other NW sustainability topics.
- You can take action via petitions by visiting PowerPastCoal.org and many environmental groups.
- You can do both of these by liking the Facebook page [Allies and Friends Fighting NW Coal Exports](#), where I post articles from Sightline and other resources I find, especially for commenting on coal decisions. For those who don't use Facebook, I also have an email list to which I send the same information at least weekly. Email me at mxbrown@charter.net.

BIRD SIGHTINGS FOR FEBRUARY 2013

There was no mention of Snowy Owls this month. Perhaps they've moved on. But several other irruptive winter species spiced up the sightings during this last month of winter.

North Richland and Leslie Groves Park

Laurie Ness reported 2 Bohemian Waxwings (uncommon winter irruptives) in a tree full of Cedar Waxwings on the morning of the 6th in North Richland (at the corner of Allegheny Court and Spring Street). Also present was a Pine Grosbeak (rare, winter) and a Merlin (uncommon, winter). Chad Merkley saw the Pine Grosbeak in the same general area that afternoon. Keith and Jane Abel spotted it on the 8th in the 2500 block of Harris in a similarly mixed flock. Also present were a Merlin and a Red-tailed Hawk. On the 9th James Cleaver searched without success for the Pine Grosbeak, but spotted a mixed flock with 3 Common Redpolls (rare winter irruptives) mixed in. Roger Gerber found the Pine Grosbeak on the 8th, but no Common Redpolls. He also saw an immature Bald Eagle perched in a backyard tree overlooking the river. James was successful on the afternoon of the 10th: Common Redpolls and a calling Pine Grosbeak. Chris and Fred spotted the Pine Grosbeak singing in full sun at the top of a spruce tree. Also present: a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, many Cedar Waxwings and the often-present Merlin and Red-tailed Hawk!

On the 14th Keith and Jane reported Red Crossbills (rare winter irruptives) in the Norway Spruce in the 2100 block of Davison. On the 16th Tony Greager saw 2 Common Redpolls drinking and bathing in a tiny stream about 50 yards northwest of the parking area on the end of Park Street. Also present were many Pine Siskin (uncommon winter irruptive). On the 19th Ivar Husa photographed a Bohemian Waxwing in a European Mountain Ash tree where about 40 Cedar Waxwings were also present. Ivar was joined by Michael Hobbs who estimated the Cedar Waxwings had

grown to a flock of one hundred. Laurie Ness got great looks at Common Redpolls on the 19th on Spring and Alexander Streets.

Michael Hobbs birded at Leslie Groves on the 19th: House finch, American Goldfinch, Pine Siskin, Snow Goose and 2 Greater White-fronted Geese. Both geese species are uncommon in winter in the Tri Cities area. He also saw 6 Greater White-fronted Geese flying across to Franklin County. Austin Johnson reported around 50 Sandhill Cranes on the 13th, a Burrowing Owl (rare, winter) at Hanford's 400 area on the 14th and an immature Bald Eagle in the Hanford/White Bluffs area on the 15th.

Laurie Ness and Dennis Rockwell compared notes on an unusual Red-tail Hawk she saw in North Richland. Dennis suggested it may have been a pale morph Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk based on sightings he had in the 1990s. Experts analyzed photos of that hawk to draw that conclusion. Keep your camera ready to help in this ID! The Abel's yard list included Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, House Finch, two Brown Creepers (uncommon, winter) and several flocks of Sandhill Cranes flying over. Late in the month Mike and Mary Lilga had a Cooper's Hawk visiting regularly.

West Richland and Horn Rapids Area

Bob and Pat Woodley found a Great Horned Owl and a male Downy Woodpecker at Horn Rapids County Park on the 2nd. Ivar Husa reported a Prairie Falcon in the area of W. Lattin and Spring Streets. Mark Gerber has been feeding a Red-breasted Nuthatch all winter at his South Highlands neighborhood in West Richland. Birding near the West Richland sewer and the golf course on the 11th he saw 2 Spotted Towhees, a Varied Thrush, an immature Snow Goose, and a Great Horned Owl. Two mature Bald Eagles were perched together in a tree just downstream of the West Richland Bridge. On the 20th Laurie Ness saw and heard a Say's Phoebe at Horn Rapids housing development. Sightings of Say's Phoebe have occurred every month, but are most

common March – September. On the 23rd the Woodleys found at least 100 Sandhill Cranes at the midway point of Snively Road.

Yakima Delta and Bateman Island

Jane and Keith Abel found a Least Sandpiper (rare, winter) in the mud behind the bus barn at the Delta on the 17th. Several people headed out to see it with different results. James Cleaver found 3 Greater Yellowlegs (rare, winter) in the same spot. So did Lisa Hill. She also saw 3 Ruddy Ducks. Bob and Pat Woodley found a small group of Ruddy Ducks (one male and three female) on the Yakima Delta on the 19th. On the 26th they saw one Common Loon (uncommon, winter), one male Canvasback (uncommon, winter) a few Ruddy Ducks, several Lesser Scaup, 40 Killdeer and 3 Greater Yellowlegs.

West Benton County

On Feb. 10, the Woodleys saw one American Dipper (accidental, winter) below the Yakima River dam in Prosser. In the little park nearby, they saw 2 Western Scrub Jays. The Abels patriotically celebrated Presidents' Day with a Lincoln Sparrow (rare, winter) sighting. It was at the Chandler pumping station on Old Inland Empire Highway between Benton City and Prosser.

Rancho Reata Area and Amon Creek

On a walk prior to the Superbowl, Tony Greager spotted at least 12 Purple Finch (rare, winter) feeding in a Mountain Ash tree. While mostly female-plumaged, there were at least 3 males present. His previous (and only) Rancho Reata sighting of Purple Finch was a single bird ten years ago at his backyard pond. Neil and Sharon Ofsthun's yard count included Eurasian Collared-Doves as well as Mourning Doves, Pine Siskin, Downy Woodpecker, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Varied Thrush and Great Horned Owl.

W.E. Johnson Park, South Richland and Badger Mountain

Austin Johnson had a Varied Thrush visit the feeder at his Central Richland home on the 6th. Lisa Hill reported on Johnson Park mid-month: Purple Finch (rare, winter), White-throated Sparrow (uncommon, winter), Virginia Rail (uncommon resident) and Fox Sparrow (uncommon, winter). Ed Rykiel had a flock of about 30 Common Redpolls (rare, winter irruptives) in his birch trees on the 18th.

Finley Area

Kris Keating reported two sightings of a Snowy Egret (accidental migrant reported previously in the months of May, June, July and September) in the area of Meals Road and Piert Road. She also spotted about 8 Sandhill Cranes on the 21st.

North Franklin and Pasco Area

Laurie Ness reported a Ferruginous Hawk on the 2nd. It was on a low basalt butte on Highway 17 about ½ mile north of the junction with SR 260. Michael Hobbs found a Wilson's Snipe (uncommon resident) in the Ringold Area (in the area where the American Dipper has been seen) on the 19th. He found a pair of Wood Ducks, a Fox Sparrow, several Cedar Waxwings, a lone Tree Swallow and a Mew Gull (uncommon, winter) in the area around the Ringold Springs Hatchery. He reported a Red-tailed Hawk (Harlan's Morph) along Hendricks Road near the irrigation canal west of Sagehill Road. Laurie and Ivar spotted two flocks of Sandhill Cranes on the 20th. On the 22nd Austin Johnson reported a Rough-legged Hawk (uncommon, winter) near Mesa on US 395. Bob Derting hiked Big Flat HMU on the 24th with a species count of 30 including a Yellow-shafted Northern Flicker, Western Meadowlarks, Spotted Towhees and 6 Evening Grosbeaks (rare winter irruptives). There were up to 10,000 Snow Geese at Burbank early that same morning. Near the end of the month Charlotte Reep was

feeding two Red-breasted Nuthatches, a Downy Woodpecker, a Spotted Towhee and an Orange-crowned Warbler in her west Pasco yard. Kevin Black was strangely (and disappointingly) silent this month.

Thanks for posting your sightings on LCBirds2, e-mailing them to me (lanirock@charter.net) or calling them in (545-4898). Comments, suggestions, and corrections are always welcome. – Lannie Smith

AUDUBON CONVENTION JULY 12-15, 2013

**“Taking Flight Together”
REGISTRATION IS OPEN:**

<http://www.audubonconvention.org/>

<http://www.audubonconvention.org/#!registration/cly1>

Join Audubon’s amazing network of dedicated leaders to celebrate One Audubon! Recognize our history of achievement as we launch into an exciting and challenging future. Unite around flyways for hemispheric impact. Turn passion into action!

Four full days of exciting field trips, inspiring speakers, in-depth hands-on workshops, and tens of program options highlighting strategic conservation successes from the four flyways. And the camaraderie only Audubon can provide.

Friday, July 12: Half and full day field trips or workshops on targeted topics

Saturday, July 13 and Sunday, July 14: Convention core program.

Monday, July 15: Half and full day field trips or workshops on targeted topics

Skamania Lodge, Stevenson, WA, in the heart of the spectacular Columbia Gorge!

LCBAS Local Field Trip: Barker Ranch, February 23, 2013

Cloudy, windy and rather chilly describes the start of the LCBAS local field trip to Barker Ranch on Saturday, 2/23. Even so, 13 hardy LCBAS birders gathered at the ranch at 8 AM and met with Michael Crowder, ranch manager, for orientation. Michael led a convoy of 3 vehicles through a maze of ranch roads that wind around various size ponds, wetlands, and fields with crops planted specifically for use by the waterfowl. Waterfowl numbers were down from earlier in the week because of the high winds on Friday and the breezy conditions kept many of the smaller birds tucked deep in the bushes. By mid morning, the clouds dissipated and the breeze weakened somewhat to yield rather pleasant conditions during the rest of the outing. No unexpected waterfowl or other unusual birds were sighted. However, we were all happy that Sandhill Cranes made an appearance in various parts of the ranch. Michael expects crane numbers to increase over the next several weeks. Waterfowl numbers will fall and rise as migration moves some farther north and brings in others from the south. After a very full morning, 13 happy birders headed home after sighting 40 species of birds. We hope another tour of the ranch can be arranged for later in the spring.



A representative from the **Trust for Public Land** will be making a presentation about its Conservation Finance program to the Benton County Commissioners on Wed., Mar. 20 at 10 AM at the Benton County Justice Center (in Kennewick).

It would be good to have a number of people there, to show support for conservation in the local area. Please let Debbie Berkowitz know if you can make it: 375-4740

secretary@lcbas.org.

The Curlew

Lower Columbia Basin Audubon
Society
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Audubon Membership Information

Please Note: LCBAS Chapter Benefits (includes a year's subscription [10 issues] to *The Curlew*) this is an additional cost to membership in National Audubon Society.

- \$20. for annual membership benefits dues or
- \$10. for full time students.

Please make check payable to **LCBAS**. I can help with an additional donation of \$_____

- Send *The Curlew* to my email address listed below. All my dues will go towards supporting LCBAS in local education and conservation efforts. _____

- I want to be on your E-alert e-mail list to receive timely notices about issues/work parties. (Your e-mail address will not be shared.)

National Audubon Society Membership (includes annual subscription to *Audubon Magazine*)

- \$20. for one year new membership in the NAS. This payment includes membership in the local chapter (LCBAS) but does not included a subscription to *The Curlew*

Please make check payable to **National Audubon Society**. Please do not send renewals for NAS to LCBAS.

For any of the options above check the appropriate boxes, clip the form and mail it with your check(s) to:

Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society, P. O. Box 1900, Richland, WA 99352

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